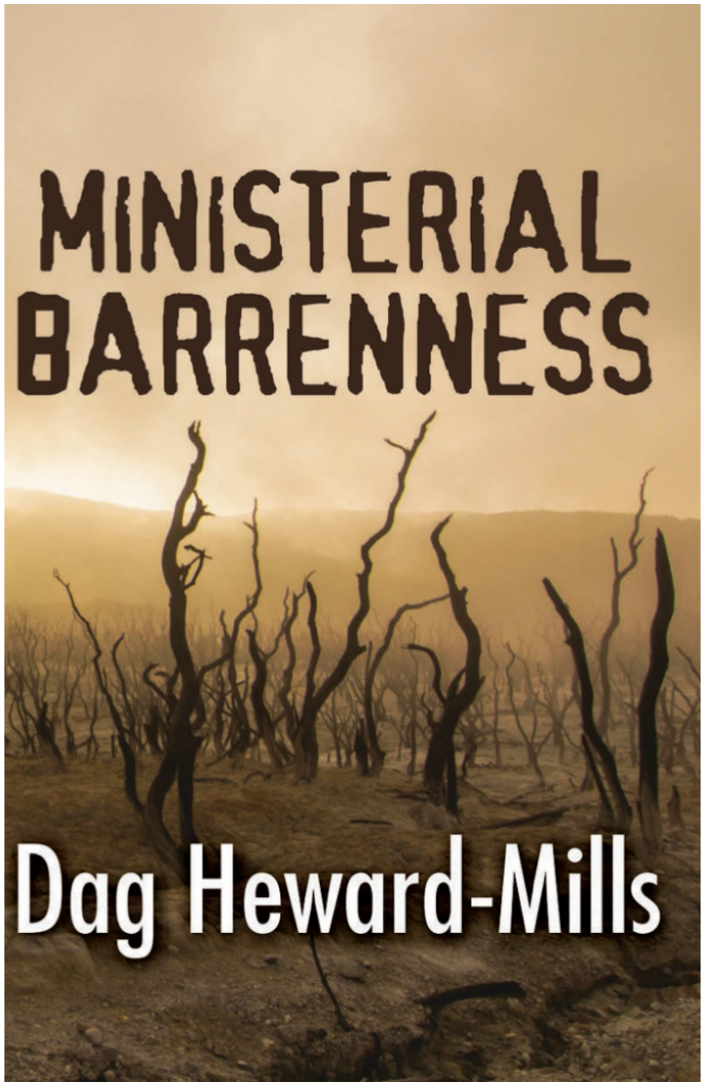
MINISTERIAL
BARRENNESS
Dag Heward-Mills

Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.
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CHAPTER 1

Barrenness in Ministry

SING, O BARREN, THOU THAT DIDST NOT BEAR; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

Isaiah 54:1-8

I am writing this book to help you to break out of barrenness in your ministry. Barrenness is a terrible, depressing and devastating problem that happens both in the natural and in the ministry.

Barrenness in ministry is the cause of much of our discouragement, disappointment and disillusionment. I once read a book in which the reasons for the fall and destruction of pastors were outlined. Among the top causes of pastoral failure was discouragement. Many pastors fall out of the race through discouragement and disillusionment. I can tell you that when you become fruitful, you will not have the chance to be discouraged or disillusioned. The fruits you have borne will keep you busy and will give you joy. How joyful a woman is when she brings forth a child!

O what a joy it is to become fruitful in God!

Lots of knowledge without fruitfulness is nothing! The kingdom of God is more than a school of history and doctrines. There is more to ministry than the acquiring of numerous certificates of Bible knowledge. Have you noticed that some of the most learned and scholarly Bible expositors are very ineffective at real ministry? In fact, sometimes the more scholarly they become, the more faithless, godless and barren they are.

Bearing fruit is a very spiritual thing. Have you wondered at the immense fruit that Christ Jesus bore? Over two thousand years have gone by and He has more fruit than He has ever had before!

Barrenness is the reason for the lack of real fruit in the modern Christian church. There are a lot of activities and a lot of programmes but there is little or no fruit. Some pastors are barren. No matter what they do, their ministries never flourish. When the spirit of barrenness is taken away

you break out in fruitfulness.

God wants us to be fruitful. God wants us to expand in ministry. In order to be fruitful you must understand what barrenness really is. Barrenness is a problem that God wants to deal with in your ministry.

In the next few chapters, we will be studying the concept of spiritual barrenness and how it affects ministry. As we study, God will reveal to us the causes of barrenness in our lives, churches and ministries.

It is important to diagnose barrenness when it exists in the ministry. The diagnosis of a problem often leads to the solution. Even in medicine, eighty per cent of our problems are solved when the right diagnosis is made. Many ministries are operating under a spirit of barrenness. Many pastors are unaware that they can have a greater level of fruitfulness. In this chapter, I will show you some signs you must look out for in order to detect barrenness in the ministry. If Jesus were standing by you, He would say these words to you:

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

John 15:8

How to Diagnose Barrenness in Your Ministry

One way to diagnose barrenness is to understand how the dictionary defines it. If you apply these definitions to your church, you will know whether you are barren or not. God will show you if a spirit of barrenness is in operation. Let us now look at the dictionary definitions of barrenness and see how they apply to ministry.

1. Barrenness in the church means you are unfruitful.

2. Barrenness in the ministry means you are sterile.

3. Barrenness in the ministry means you are childless, heirless and issueless.

4. Barrenness in the ministry means you are non-productive.

5. Barrenness in the ministry means you are deficient in the production of souls, converts and disciples.

6. Barrenness in the ministry means you are not conceiving at all or producing at all.

7. Barrenness in the ministry means you are producing fruit in very small quantities.

8. Barrenness in the ministry means you are a wasteland.

9. Barrenness in the ministry means you are not producing normal fruit.

10. Barrenness in the ministry means you are bleak, abandoned and dry.

11. Barrenness in the ministry means you are depleted.

12. Barrenness in the ministry means you are not copious in producing fruits.

13. Barrenness in the ministry means you have a scanty attendance.

14. Barrenness in the ministry means you are dull and dry.

15. A barren individual does not produce after his kind.

Let us now look at the symptoms of barrenness within the church context. Examine your church and see whether barrenness exists.

How to Diagnose Barrenness in Your Church

Barrenness can be said to exist in a church if any of the following exists:

1. If there is no growth in the number of your church members.

2. If there are no converts, or no growth in the number of converts.

3. If there is no growth in church attendance.

4. If there is no growth in the number of full-time staff.

5. If there is no baptism, or no growth in the number of people baptized.

6. If there is the absence of healings and miracles.

7. If there is no growth in the number of leaders in the church.

8. If there is no increase in the knowledge of God.

9. If there is no growth in the depth of relationships.

10. If you have no visions and dreams given by the Holy Spirit or if there is no growth in the number of visions and dreams you receive from the Holy Spirit.

11. If there is no programme to send out missionaries or, no increase in the number of missionaries sent out.

12. If there is no growth in the finances of the church.

13. If there is no increase in the number of Scriptures you know.

14. If there is no growth in your experience in the ministry.

15. If there is the absence of, or no growth in the outreaches of the church.

16. If there is no growth in the length and depth of your prayer or no prayer at all.

17. If there is no increase in challenges and mountains to overcome.

18. If there is no challenge and inspiration to a greater vision.

19. If there is no growth in understanding.

20. If there is no growth in fellowships and branches in your ministry.

By the time you finish reading this book, all traces of barrenness will be gone from your life. Receive grace and wisdom to break out from the spirit of barrenness!

CHAPTER 2

Spiritual Blindness and Barrenness

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that YE SHALL NEITHER BE BARREN NOR UNFRUITFUL in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. BUT HE THAT LACKETH THESE THINGS IS BLIND, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

2 Peter 1:8-9

Spiritual blindness is a major cause of barrenness. Why is that? Spiritually blind people cannot see heaven and hell and therefore they are not motivated to do anything for eternity. In their blindness, they see nothing, even though heaven and hell are real. Many people who stand in a pulpit are spiritually blind and that is why they do not talk anymore about heaven and hell. The rich man went to hell and Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:19-26). These places are real, whether you believe in them or not. Anyone who does not talk about heaven and hell is spiritually blind. Spiritually blind people are completely oblivious of many realities. They cannot see eternity and they cannot also see their own state.

Spiritual blindness is the most dangerous spiritual condition that affects religious people. This is why many religious people are barren in the ministry. People who have been servants of God for some time are often affected by spiritual blindness. Most religious people in Jesus' time were spiritually blind. Jesus referred to them as blind ministers. In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, Jesus described the Pharisees as being blind.

> Woe unto you, YE BLIND GUIDES, which say, whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! YE FOOLS AND BLIND: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?
>
> Matthew 23:16-17

> YE FOOLS AND BLIND: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?
>
> Matthew 23:19

> YE BLIND GUIDES, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel … Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.
>
> Matthew 23:24, 26

Once you have been a Christian for a long time, you are a candidate for spiritual blindness. Because this is such a serious condition, it is important to be able to define it and identify it when it is developing. Just as spiritual blindness enveloped the Pharisees, spiritual blindness envelopes long-standing Christians, ministers and churches. Let us look at how spiritual blindness developed in a Pharisee.

Four Signs of Spiritual Blindness

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke 18:9-14

This Pharisee was completely blind to the fact that he was far from God and not pleasing to God. He thought he was something that he was not. He was completely unaware of his true state. Spiritual blindness is something that affects the modern church. Notice how the Laodicean church was struck with a state of blindness.

(I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and KNOWEST NOT THAT THOU ART WRETCHED, AND MISERABLE, AND POOR, AND BLIND, AND NAKED: Revelation 3:15-17)

This blindness is a very serious condition because it caused the Israelites to miss their Messiah when He came.

1. Spiritually blind people are self-centred.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Philippians 2:4

Barrenness is caused by self-centredness. The spiritually blind Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14 prayed "thus with himself." The Pharisee was into himself. His life centred on himself and what was important to him. There was nothing like "others." He never thought of other people. Not thinking of other people makes you barren, fruitless and useless.

Spiritually blind people are self-centred. Self-centredness has two branches. On one hand, you are concerned with yourself and you never think of helping or saving other people. The other branch of self-centredness has to do with the fact that you do not know what is happening in other people's ministries. You think that everything great and important is happening in *your* ministry. Many rich western ministries became spiritually blind and they could not see what God was doing in poorer developing countries. Often, rich and successful ministries are struck with severe blindness until they become poor and unsuccessful themselves. Then, suddenly, their eyes open and they find out that there are other important parts of the body of Christ. They find out that even though a church does not have a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to give as honorarium it is still a valid ministry.

2. Spiritually blind people compare themselves with others:

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

2 Corinthians 10:12

God intends for you to compare yourself with the standards of the word of God. Those who compare themselves with themselves are spiritually blind and barren. The spiritually blind Pharisee compared himself with the other person who was praying in the temple. Instead of concentrating on God and praying for his deficiencies, he was busy comparing himself with his fellow man. Comparing yourself with other people is a dangerous practice. No two things are really the same. There are reasons why things are the way they are.

3. Spiritually blind people despise others.

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Romans 12:16

Failing to condescend to men of low estate will prevent you from becoming fruitful. Fruitfulness is caused by humble people who labour and work with the humble masses. Proud ministries despise small struggling ministries, seeing them as unanointed and irrelevant in the grand scheme of God's master plan. Spiritual blindness is a very serious condition that caused the Pharisees to miss Jesus Christ when He appeared.

4. Spiritually blind people have a deep sense of self-righteousness based on a set of rules that gives them confidence in their righteousness.

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and GOING ABOUT TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Romans 10:3

Self-righteous people are often fruitless. Self-righteous people are full of idealism. They know what is right and they know what is wrong. But they are not fruitful. There was a time that listening to the radio was considered a sin by self-righteous people. There was a time that watching television was considered a sin by self-righteous people. There was a time that taking medicine was considered a sin by self-righteous people. There was a time that wearing trousers was thought to be a sin. All these rules were made at different times for different reasons.

Unfortunately, the numerous rules that spiritually blind people have, gives them a false sense of confidence. Paul said, they go about to establish their own righteousness and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3). Almost every Christian has a set of things that minister to him a sense of righteousness. When we do these things we feel righteous and we feel holy.

Spiritually blind people have a deep sense of self-righteousness based on a number of things that they have not been involved in. The fact that you have not done certain things before does not make you righteous.

Spiritually blind people have a set of things that they do not do, that give them even more confidence in their false righteousness. They say things like, "I have never committed this sin before. I have never smoked, I have never drank alcohol, I have never committed adultery, I have never failed to pay my tithes, I have never taken drugs."

They do not realise that they have not done these things because of God's mercy and grace. Beware of developing confidence in a list of things you have done or have not done. It will only lead to your spiritual blindness and barrenness.

CHAPTER 3

Short-sightedness and Barrenness

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you THAT YE SHALL NEITHER BE BARREN NOR UNFRUITFUL in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and CANNOT SEE AFAR OFF, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

2 Peter 1:8-9

Short-sightedness is one of the crippling causes of barrenness. What is short-sightedness? Short-sightedness is when you cannot see far. Short-sightedness makes people do less and less for God.

What makes people settle into this state of barrenness? Why are many ministers of the gospel so barren?

Many ministers cannot see far. They see only a short distance from where they live but there is more to the world than the town where you live. There are millions of souls waiting in the corners of the earth.

Perhaps, you see only your one little church! Indeed, many people only see the community in which they live. They cannot see the next community. They do not know what is happening there and they do not care!

Many people see only their city. Indeed, many people only see a section of their city. Many people see only their tribe! Many people see only those who speak their language! Many people see only people from their country! Many people see only people in neighbouring countries! Many people see only people of their colour! Many Americans see only Americans! Many Nigerians see only Nigerians! Many Brazilians see only Brazilians!

What did Jesus teach us to see? He taught us to see as far as the end of the world. If your eye were seeing as far as Jesus taught us to see, you would not be as barren as you are. You would rise up knowing you had many things to do. If your eyes were open and you could see as far as God has asked you to see, you would see many nations, many tongues and many types of people, all waiting and hoping for the good news.

Barrenness has fallen on the church because it has become a short-sighted church where black people only see black people, Americans see only America and Africans see only Africa. It is time to open your eyes and see beyond!

Have you thought about how many ministers have a really international ministry? How many ministers have a really transnational ministry? Most pastors do not look very far! Because most ministers only look within their city, they have a small and limited ministry. It is time for you to break out of this barrenness by seeing afar.

CHAPTER 4

Forgetfulness and Barrenness

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that YE SHALL NEITHER BE BARREN NOR UNFRUITFUL in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and HATH FORGOTTEN THAT HE WAS PURGED FROM HIS OLD SINS.

2 Peter 1:8-9

From the scripture above, we see that barrenness is also caused by forgetfulness. Forgetting, that salvation comes to people when they are purged from their old sins, by the blood of Jesus, is a major cause of barrenness.

Today, salvation is not a popular topic in the body of Christ. There are ministers who look down on the salvation message that Billy Graham preached. These people forget that salvation is the doorway through which sinners come into the body of Christ. Most ministers of the gospel cannot preach for one hour on the topic of salvation.

Salvation comes through the preaching of the gospel. We are not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Why are we not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Because the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power of salvation! When the gospel is preached, people are saved, people are born again and people are changed. That is why it is important to preach the gospel. We cannot be ashamed of the gospel. We cannot forget the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is how we found salvation.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the news that God sent His Son into the world and His Son shed His blood that we might be saved. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the news about the cross and the great price that was paid for the salvation of the world. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a specific message that cannot be altered or changed whatsoever.

Paul told the Corinthians that he was determined not to know anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He did not want to have any business dealings with the Corinthians. He did not want discussions on investment opportunities. Paul did not want to set up a university in Corinth. Paul did not want to build a hospital in Corinth. Paul did not want to build a school. Paul did not want to improve the education in Corinth. Paul did not want to meet the government leaders. Paul wanted to discuss Jesus Christ with the Corinthians. His message had to do with the crucifixion of Christ and what it meant.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

Apostle Paul was determined to stick with the gospel that he had received. He did not want to deviate from the core message of Jesus Christ and the salvation that He had brought us. Notice his remarks to the Corinthians. Please read the details of the gospel message below.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Today, many top leaders in the church have forgotten the gospel of Jesus Christ. Perhaps they are even ashamed of this message. One pastor said a religion that speaks about the blood is not attractive. Another person said, "If we want to attract people, we cannot emphasize on such gory subjects as the cross, the crucifixion and the blood of Jesus." Another pastor declared that preaching about the prosperity and the good life that Jesus offers is more important than preaching about the cross, the blood and the suffering of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, from the topics that people preach about today in many churches, we can see that prosperity, a good life, a successful life, a happy life, a good family, nice children, good investments and many others are more important than preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, these are the things that are emphasized in the church today.

But it is a big mistake to set aside the cross, the blood, the crucifixion and the suffering of Jesus Christ and replace it with teachings on prosperity, a good life, a successful life, a happy life, a good family, nice children, good investments and good houses. It is a mistake to teach people to be millionaires instead of teaching them about Jesus Christ. Do not be impressed by backslidden pastors who preach as though they are lecturers in a secular university. Do not be impressed by smooth words and nice rhyming sayings. Smooth words are not necessarily good words.

The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

Psalm 55:21

Barrenness has fallen on the church because we have forgotten that salvation comes through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I once interacted with a pastor who mostly preaches and writes about how to make money. I asked him what he was taught when he became a Christian. He mentioned many well-known Christian topics like discipleship, sacrifice and salvation. Then I asked him why he was always preaching about money. I wondered why he would not want to teach Christians what he was taught that established him in Christ.

It is sad that people have forgotten how they became Christians! It is sad that people have forgotten how salvation happens in the first place! Indeed, forgetting is the principal cause of barrenness.

CHAPTER 5

Aqar Barrenness of Your Ministry

There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren (*Aqar*), in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.

Exodus 23:26

Several Hebrew words are translated into the word "barren" or "barrenness." Each of these words has a special meaning and throws the light of revelation on the subject of barrenness.

AQAR

This word means "the destruction or removal of generative organs". It also means "to have non-functioning organs", "to be barren or sterile". It is used in reference to people like Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, the mother of Samson, and Rebecca.

But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

Genesis 11:30

And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

Judges 13:2-3

And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Genesis 25:21

They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

1 Samuel 2:5

Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

Deuteronomy 7:14

There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren (AQAR), in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.

Exodus 23:26

Ministers suffering from *AQAR* barrenness are deficient in the generative aspect of ministry. This means they are deficient in the *outreach* and *fruit-bearing* aspects of ministry. They are unable to give birth to anything in the ministry. Such pastors may have many activities but these programmes do not bring much fruit for the ministry.

One way of fighting barrenness is to consider the outreach aspect of your ministry. Do you have crusades? Do you plant new churches? The absence of crusades, breakfast meetings, witnessing campaigns and real ministry work, shows a deficiency in the generative aspect of your ministry.

Barren people who are members of the church receive the Word and probably have the messages. They may even be involved in other activities of the church. They are seen at prayer meetings and become “fat” spiritually. However, such people will not be involved in ministry, evangelism or soul winning. This proves that they have a deficiency in their spiritual generative organs.

CHAPTER 6

Shakol Barrenness of Ministry

I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate. (SHAKOL).

Leviticus 26:22

Several Hebrew words are translated into the word "barren" or "barrenness." Each of these words has a special meaning and throws the light of revelation on the subject of barrenness.

SHAKOL

This means "to miscarry, to suffer abortion, to be bereaved of children, to be barren, to cast your young, to make childless and to be deprived of children".

And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.

2 Kings 2:19

I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate. (SHAKOL)

Leviticus 26:22

Any minister experiencing *SHAKOL* cannot keep the souls that God gives him. Such ministers constantly cast their young and suffer abortions. They cannot sustain growth and are unable to continue in the things that God gives to them. Many churches receive large numbers of visitors and, even, converts. You must work on keeping these converts. You must make sure that your visitors come again.

I always pray over my members. I pray to God, "Lord, when they go, let them come back to church. As they come back, let them come with more people." I pray that each member becomes a minister and that each minister gives birth to a church. This kind of prayer counteracts *shakol* barrenness.

Another reason why some other churches are unable to break out is that they attack their young leaders. They kill fresh blood. The leaders do not allow mavericks to flourish around them. The anointing on all of us is greater than the anointing on one person. You must allow fresh leaders and pastors to be released under your ministry. The fastest growth always occurs when there are multiple ministers working together.

CHAPTER 7

Melechah Barrenness of Ministry

And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren (*MELECHAH*). And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

2 Kings 2:19-22

Several Hebrew words are translated into the word "barren" or "barrenness." Each of these words has a special meaning and throws more light on the subject of barrenness.

MELECHAH

This word means "a salted land, a desert or a barren land". It speaks of no produce and no life. The land is dead to any kind of seed. People suffering from *MELECHAH* are like spiritually salted lands. In spite of what you pour into them, they are unable to bear fruit. They are incapable of germinating seeds.

A cursory glance at every congregation will reveal several "salted lands" staring at you. Mercy and atonement! They have been in the church for many years and have heard many sermons. They have been anointed and prayed for specially, but they still cannot bear fruit. Much is poured into them but little can be expected from these salted ones.

For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

Jeremiah 17:6

There are also salted churches. No matter the input, the church does not grow. No new churches are planted from that church. Until the salted land is healed, there will be no fruit.

He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

Psalm 107:33-34

And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my Lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren (MELECHAH). And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

A pastor who is a salted land does not give rise to other pastors of his own kind. He remains in the church he pastors, but cannot bring forth other pastors. Break out of the salted state and start to think of birthing more pastors and more churches!

I remember the story of a church that could not grow. No matter what happened and no matter who preached, there was no breakthrough. One day, a visiting pastor was waiting on the Lord and he had a vision. Way up in the ceiling he saw a demon sitting above the congregation. This evil spirit had greatly affected the church for many years. God opened the pastor's eyes to see the "salt" that was making the church barren. He dealt with the evil spirit and commanded it to leave.

After that experience, the church began to grow in leaps and bounds. I believe there are real "salted land" situations that need the healing hand of God. I see God removing the saltiness from your life, church and ministry!

CHAPTER 8

Otser Barrenness of Ministry

The grave; and the barren (*OTSER*) womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.

Proverbs 30:16

Hebrew words are important in understanding the revelation God is trying to bring to us. One of these words is the word "*Otser*."

OTSER

This Hebrew word means "To inclose, to hold back and to maintain". It also means "To close up, to restrain, and retain". In addition, it means "To shut up, to withhold and to stop".

The grave; and the barren (*OTSER*) womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.

Proverbs 30:16

People suffering from this kind of barrenness hold back intentionally. They know a lot, but they hold back and refuse to be fruitful. Pastors with *OTSER* barrenness have the finances and the anointing to break forth in ministry. However, they give their strength to other things like orphanages, schools and social work. Some of them are more concerned about being politically influential and socially acceptable than doing the work of God. The drive for ministry is restrained!

Such people can do many things for the Lord but are restrained. They hold back their talents even though they are usually experienced people who could do much more for Jesus. It is often because they have decided to give their strength and talents to other things.

If you are a pastor, you will notice in your congregation people who are leaders of Old Boys' Associations or even political groups. They have time for politics, soccer, MBA, or PhD courses, and other activities. However, when it comes to the work of God, they are enclosed and restrained. They are reserved when it comes to prayer and worship, but vocal when it comes to discussing politics and other issues. These are the people suffering from *otser*.

CHAPTER 9

Tsiyah Barrenness of Ministry

I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry LAND (*TSIYAH*) springs of water.

Isaiah 41:18

Hebrew words are important in understanding the revelation God is trying to bring to us. One of these words is the word "*Tsiyah*." God is setting you free from this type of barrenness.

TSIYAH

This word speaks of being "Parched and barren". It speaks of "A drought, a dry land and a wilderness".

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

Psalm 63:1

I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry LAND (*TSIYAH*) springs of water.

Isaiah 41:18

A church suffering from *TSIYAH* is often dry of the Spirit. It is a wilderness devoid of worship, prayer and the lifting up of hands. That kind of church is usually very secular and logical in its approach to life and the ministry. Spiritual dryness and the lack of worship is a true sign of barrenness. Introducing new worship songs will often fight against this kind of barrenness.

Sometimes, changing your worship leader will lead to a major change in your church. Changing your choir leader and the type of songs your choir sings can also greatly affect your church. Perhaps if the choir were to sing songs about soul winning and reaching the lost, many outreach ministries would begin.

Do not wait forever to make the changes you need in order to bring fruitfulness to your ministry.

CHAPTER 10

Steiras Barrenness of Ministry

And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren (*steiras*), and they both were now well stricken in years.

Luke 1:7

There are also Greek words that are translated *barren* or *barrenness*. These words also help to throw more light on the subject of spiritual and ministerial barrenness. Through your understanding of these words you will overcome every type of barrenness in your life.

STEIRAS

And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren (*steiras*), and they both were now well stricken in years… And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

Luke 1:7, 36

For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Galatians 4:27

This word means, "To be stiff and unnatural". It speaks of sterility and barrenness. *Stiffness* describes people who are unyielding and disobedient to the Word of God.

Anyone who is disobedient to the Word will be barren. Such people love to look distinguished and diplomatic. Sometimes they pretend to be spiritual but in reality they are not.

Churches often have these unspiritual and stiff people sitting in the front row. This can prevent growth and induce the *STEIRAS* atmosphere, which promotes barrenness. You will notice that growing churches are full of lively, exuberant and excited people dancing and praising the Lord.

The church is not a who-is-who parade! It is time to remove the "deep freezers" from the prominent positions we have given them.

CHAPTER 11

Argos Barrenness of Your Ministry

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful (*ARGOS*) in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:8

Greek words are important in understanding the revelation God is trying to bring to us. One of these words is the word "*Argos*."

ARGOS

This word means, "Inactive, unemployed, lazy and useless". It also speaks of "Being idle, slow and barren". Laziness is one of the principal causes of unfruitfulness in ministry. Lazy people are inactive in church. Their laziness makes them useless to God.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful (*ARGOS*) in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:8

Unfortunately, the church is made up of masses of spiritually inactive people. To break this type of barrenness, it is important to preach about diligence. It is important to teach the congregation that they must win souls for the Lord.

CHAPTER 12
The Barrenness of Old Age

But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

Genesis 11:30

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

Genesis 16:1-4

We all know the story of Abraham and Sarah. You could consider Sarah as a type of church. You could also consider her as a type of minister. Sarah could be likened to a pastor who is not bearing as much fruit because he is old. Many older churches are now barren. Perhaps they started out as fruitful ministries but as the years have gone by, the anointing and the river of the Holy Spirit is replaced by tradition, rituals and custom. Sarah could be likened to a kind of church in which there is no longer life because of old age.

You can fight old age barrenness by doing these things:

1. Do not transfer the duty of outreach and ministry to anyone else.

According to Genesis 16:1-2, Sarah shifted the responsibility of child-bearing to someone else. In an attempt to bear fruit, Sarah shifted her work to Hagar. This was a man-made effort to overcome barrenness. She tried to overcome barrenness in the wrong way. Do not try to delegate what you must do yourself. Pastors must rise up and become fruitful themselves. Pastors must pray themselves and preach the Word.

2. Do not reject the prophetic word.

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?

Genesis 18:12

Sarah laughed when she heard the prophecy about Isaac. Receive the visitation of God for your life through revelations, dreams and the spoken Word. Older people tend to mock at the prophetic word, seeing it as impossible. They are experienced in life and much more cynical and scornful about prophetic direction.

…Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets and you shall prosper.

2 Chronicles 20:20 (NKJV)

Prophetic messages can make a difference in your ministry. Years ago, I received a message from a prophet. He saw me carrying a flaming torch and leading many people. He gave this message to me in 1980. Forty-two years have gone by and this prophecy remains in my heart as a true vision. It encouraged me to do the work of God as a student. It encouraged me to persist in the ministry even after school.

3. Believe in God, His prophets and in the preaching of His Word.

And God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

Genesis 17:15

Walk in your calling. You must overcome the greatest enemies of the faith walk: fear and intimidation. Walking in fear and intimidation will not lead to fruitfulness in ministry.

4. Take the practical step that leads to fruitfulness even if it looks like something for younger people.

For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age…And Abraham called the name of his son…Isaac.

Genesis 21:2-3

Isaac was not supernaturally conceived as was the case of Christ Jesus. He was conceived by the normal method of sexual intercourse. Sarah had to undress and act like an energetic young lady with a youthful husband! Abraham and Sarah were forced to engage in sexual happiness in their nineties. Can you imagine a ninety-year-old, menopausal woman acting like a pretty youthful bride again?

Decide to be youthful, zealous, emotional, exciting, energetic and adventurous again. This will break the spell and curse of barrenness over your ministry. Sarah had sex with her husband at the age of ninety. No matter what prophecy is spoken over your life, there will always be some practical steps you have to take.

Some ministers are too “old” in their actions and thoughts! Some amount of youthfulness is needed in the ministry. Youthfulness is necessary for fruitfulness!

CHAPTER 13

The Barrenness of Familiarity

David went home so he could ask the Lord to bless his family. But Saul's daughter Michal went out and started yelling at him. 'You were really great today!' she said. "You acted like a dirty old man, dancing half-naked in front of your servants' slave girls." David told her, "The Lord didn't choose your father or anyone else in your family to be the leader of His people. The Lord chose me and I was celebrating in honour of him. I'll show you how great I can be! I'll even be disgusted to myself. But those slave girls you talked about will still honour me!" Michal never had any children.

2 Samuel 6:20-23 (Contemporary English Version)

Familiarity is a major cause of unfruitfulness and barrenness. Familiar people cannot be fruitful.

Familiarity is the greatest block to the anointing. It cuts off the flow of the anointing that is needed for ministry and church growth. Ministry is a spiritual thing and unless spiritual principles are obeyed, the ministry dries up and barrenness results.

Michal is a type of barren ministry. She suffered from familiarity towards her husband. She paid for it by becoming barren. Many people have become barren in ministry because they became too familiar with the man of God.

> David went home so he could ask the Lord to bless his family. But Saul's daughter Michal went out and started yelling at him. 'You were really great today!' she said. "You acted like a dirty old man, dancing half-naked in front of your servants' slave girls." David told her, "The Lord didn't choose your father or anyone else in your family to be the leader of His people. The Lord chose me and I was celebrating in honour of him. I'll show you how great I can be! I'll even be disgusted to myself. But those slave girls you talked about will still honour me!" Michal never had any children.
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> 2 Samuel 6:20-23 (Contemporary English Version)

Familiarity **means "To know someone or something so well and in such a way as to cause you to lose your admiration, respect and sense of awe".**

It also connotes a sense of becoming presumptuous where a person is too confident in a way that shows a lack of respect.

1. Familiarity was the cause of Michal's barrenness.

2. Familiarity is still the cause of spiritual barrenness in many Christians today.

3. Familiarity is the greatest block to receiving God's power from God's men.

4. No matter how great the gift of God, it is neutralized by familiarity.

Jesus was the greatest healer and teacher, yet His anointing was neutralized by the presence of

familiar people.

> **And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary … And they were offended at him. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.**
>
> **Mark 6:1-3,5**

This Scripture shows us that Jesus could not perform miracles in His hometown. They knew Him too well to receive Him as the Son of God. They had questions about His parents, His family and His background.

Moses who commanded a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day, could not impress his own sister Miriam. She criticized him about his marriage and suffered for it. My heart is often closed to those who are familiar towards me. I simply do not flow towards them. I can virtually sense the questions in the hearts of people suffering from familiarity towards me.

Familiarity drives men of God away from their colleagues, friends and family. It leads them towards the non-familiar, the poor, the forgotten and neglected ones. This is where the outsiders come in. Outsiders often come in to replace people who have become too familiar with the anointed one.

Those Who have the Barrenness of Familiarity

There are certain groups of people who easily become prey to familiarity. These are usually people who know the man of God closely.

1. Being a colleague or friend of the man of God can make you familiar and barren.

These people also experience familiarity. They have been around you for so long and seen your vicissitudes. It is easy to slip and slide into familiarity. Sometimes it would be better not to know someone closely in order not to develop an air of familiarity.

When I started my church as a medical student, very few of my colleagues were able to receive from me. They knew me too well and would say in their hearts, "Is this not Dag? We know him and we know his class. We saw him struggling at an exam last week. We know when he passes and when he fails! How can this lanky boy call himself a pastor?"

2. Being a relative of a man of God can make you familiar and barren.

Relatives also suffer from familiarity. They would say, "Is this not Azoyzoy's (my father's nickname) son? We carried him when he was a baby."

They ask, "Do you remember me? I carried you when you were two years old."

They say, "I knew your father very well."

With this background, how can such people receive me as a man of God?

3. Being married to a man of God can make you familiar and barren.

Pastors' wives often suffer from severe familiarity. Just like Michal, they are not impressed with their husbands when everyone is impressed.

They say things like, "I know you. No one knows you better than I do. I am the only one who can tell you certain things! I am not one of those people who give you praise and affirmation in the office! If people knew how you really were, they would be surprised. No one knows what you are really like."

In a sense, they are right about all these things, but the fact is that they have become victims of familiarity!

4. Constantly choosing to sit at the back of the church is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

Familiarity is when you are no longer intrigued and excited about the pastor and his preaching. You do not bother to come near anymore. Familiar people just sit at the back and observe from a distance.

Once, I attended a Kenneth Hagin conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma. When I entered the hall, the ushers tried to give me a seat at the back.

I thought to myself, "How can I sit at the back when Kenneth Hagin is preaching?" "I want to be as near as possible!" I negotiated with the usher and even made friends with him.

I told him, "Sir, you don't know where I have come from."

I continued, "I have flown thousands and thousands of miles to be here today. I need to be as near as possible. There is no way I can go upstairs or even to the back."

He seemed to understand and I eventually had my way. Unbelievably, I managed to sit on the second row. I was so excited when Kenneth Hagin walked by my seat as he preached.

You see, when you are familiar, seeing a man of God nearby or from afar makes no difference. Later on, I had a discussion with the principal of their Bible School. I asked him if they had any problems with their students. To my surprise he told me that they did. Their main problem was familiarity.

He said to me, "There are some students who do not come for important conferences like these."

He lamented, "This is a great prophet of God that people come to listen to from all over the world. But right here, there are students who do not bother to cross the road to come to church." You see, familiarity breeds contempt.

Familiarity is all about knowing someone so well that it causes you to lose your admiration and respect.

5. Sleeping during preaching is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

Yawning is often a sign of boredom. A familiar person is presumptuous and arrogantly assumes he knows what is coming. Often, people who yawn during the preaching of the Word are

saying, "I know this sermon, I know what is coming. I know his line of thought. This man has nothing new to say."

Sleep comes when we are tired. But sometimes it comes because of monotony and boredom. When the man of God fails to intrigue you anymore, you may find yourself sleeping as he preaches. Familiarity breeds disloyalty. Familiarity created Judas. Judas is referred to as "*mine own familiar friend*" (Psalm 41:9). When people are familiar, they lose their respect and they cross boundaries they should never cross.

Familiarity makes people say things they should never say. Michal became a critic of the man after God's own heart. David had built a tabernacle but she was not impressed. God called David, "a man after mine own heart" (Acts 13:22) but she, a mere mortal, despised him. Imagine that God is impressed but you are not impressed. Is it not amazing!

Familiarity often stems from jealousy and carnality. Michal was jealous of the girls who seemed to appreciate David's ministry. She disliked the fact that David seemed to be impressed with these young whippersnappers.

…Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, HOW GLORIOUS WAS THE KING OF ISRAEL TO DAY, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

2 Samuel 6:20

When Miriam criticized Moses, she no longer saw him as God's anointed. She moved into the flesh and became a disloyal rebel.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

Numbers 12:1

Judas was the highest kind of traitor. He paid the ultimate price for allowing himself to be deceived by familiarity.

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Psalm 41:9

I have had different people getting close to me at different times in my life. Circumstances can sometimes cause people to associate closely with the man of God. Under such circumstances, the person is susceptible to the spirit of familiarity. It takes spiritual discipline not to become familiar.

I have noticed in my life and ministry how people become over-familiar when given the slightest chance. Let me just remind you of the definition of familiarity. *Familiarity* means "To know someone or something very well and in such a way as to cause you to lose your admiration, respect and sense of awe. It also connotes a sense of becoming presumptuous, where a person is too confident in a way that shows a lack of respect".

One day, a young lady was having a problem in her marriage. Her husband said to her, "I am going to report you to the Bishop."

She retorted, "I don't care. He also has problems."

I smiled when I heard this. I knew that it was only familiarity that was rearing its head. Perhaps, I was wrong to have allowed this person to spend a few nights in our home. On another occasion, another relative who had spent a few days with our family was having some problems. After counselling this relative, she seemed to have understood what I had shared with her. She thanked me and seemed genuinely blessed.

Unfortunately, she told someone later that I am a man of knowledge and not a man of experience. What she was saying was that I had no experience in the kind of problem she had and my advice was therefore theoretical!

I thought to myself, "I have now become a man of knowledge without experience. It is only because I had allowed this person to relate so closely to my family and I that she had the nerve to make such a comment."

Sometimes it is better to know someone from afar so that you can continue to receive from his ministry. When you are too familiar with your pastor, you can mistakenly see him as "a man of knowledge without experience"!

In your relationship with a man of God, are you becoming familiar? In the next chapter, I will describe some signs which will help you determine the extent to which you are familiar. Remember that familiarity is the best way to kill the anointing. It has the greatest capability of neutralizing the power of God's gift.

6. Not listening to messages preached by the man of God is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

I have rarely seen a fruitful person who does not listen to messages. Someone who listens to preaching messages has not become over familiar with the pastor's voice. He sees it as an opportunity to be continuously blessed by the pastor when he is not around. Have you asked yourself why you do not listen to messages anymore? The answer may be familiarity.

7. Not reading the books of your man of God is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

I notice how people come from afar to buy my books. There are times people have travelled many miles to acquire and "devour" large quantities of my books and preaching messages. Amazingly, my own church members often pass by these same books and messages and instead call for two meat pies and a bottle of Coca-Cola. Familiarity causes you to lose your sense of wonder and intrigue.

8. Discussing the background of the man of God is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

Every man of God basically, is a "man". Since he is a man, he goes through what all men go through. No man that God ever chose has a perfect life. Everyone of them has a past! He has a family. He has failings. He has an imperfect marriage. He has challenges just like everyone else.

It is easy to pick on any aspect of his natural life and neutralize him. Discussing the man of God in a natural way is a sure sign that you have lost your sense of fascination for him. This is the surest way to cancel out the effect of the anointing on your man of God.

When Jesus preached in His hometown, the Scripture says in Luke 4:28, "...when they heard

these things, they were filled with wrath." The familiar people were angry at Jesus' sermon. But when He preached in Galilee according to Luke 4:32 "They were astonished at His doctrine". The hometown people were simply amazed at Jesus' ministry.

Notice also that familiarity happened in Nazareth, Jesus' hometown. Meanwhile, they were awestruck in a city of Galilee about two hundred kilometres from Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. The difference here is that in Nazareth, people knew His background; in Galilee, they did not.

9. Discussing the family issues of the man of God is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

Mark 6:3

By doing this, you are cutting yourself from receiving God's miracle for your life. When Jesus went to His hometown, there was a long discussion as to who He really was. Someone may have said, "I know that boy. He is my nephew. He and his father have repaired my wardrobes and cupboards for many years."

Jesus could do very few miracles because of the high level of familiarity and doubt in the city. Do not let familiarity cut off your blessing!

10. Fault-finding and magnifying faults is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

Whenever you think of the great men of God you respect, you do not often think of their faults.

When there is a visiting preacher, no one considers whether he is impatient or easily angered. No one thinks of whether this man is in debt or whether he has an extravagant lifestyle. All we do is to receive the ministry of this man of God.

However, these are thoughts that occur to us about men of God we are familiar with. We think, "He must be angry today, this man is not patient." As he preaches we say to ourselves, "We understand what he is saying; why does he not progress to the next point?"

I remember years ago, I had a church member who really enjoyed my messages. She recommended me highly to many people who later joined the church. However, as time went by, she became familiar with my preaching and with me.

One day after church she said to me, "I think you went over last week's point for too long." She continued, "There was very little time for the new points that you brought up." A few weeks later, she made another remark, "The repetition in your preaching is too much." After this I noticed the frown on her face each time I preached. This lady eventually stopped coming to church.

She might have been right, but what she did not realize was that, I was preaching to people who came to church one week and missed the other week. I virtually had a new crowd every week. I may have had my faults, but God has worked through me in spite of them. Have you removed the log in your own eye? Why are you concentrating so hard on the speck in the pastor's eye? Familiarity has made you critical!

11. Evaluating and rating men of God is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

Democracy in its essential nature, calls on us to evaluate our leaders constantly. This is what enables us to vote for the right person. Unfortunately, many are deceived when they think that this same practice of evaluation must be brought into the church.

I was driving home one day after church when one of the people in the car with me asked a question. He asked, "How did you find the sermon?"

The car was quiet for a moment then someone said, "I think he did well, I will give him 70%."

Then an older man said, "No, no, no. He deserves about 49%."

Someone asked, "Why 49%, the message wasn't too bad?"

I mused to myself, "This poor pastor is being assessed by his congregation members." His members had now become familiar!

12. Not believing the man of God's advice is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

When you regard someone highly, you cherish whatever advice he has to offer. As familiarity sets in, it becomes more and more difficult to accept advice. Every time advice is given there is a reason not to follow it.

13. Having no regard for the anointing is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

The fact that he is even anointed does not occur to you. All you see are natural things. If your eyes are on the natural, you will see weakness, dishonour and corruption.

> **So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in CORRUPTION; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in DISHONOUR; it is raised in glory: it is sown in WEAKNESS; it is raised in power:**
>
> **1 Corinthians 15:42-43**

14. Not honouring and appreciating your man of God is a sign of familiarity and barrenness.

As you get used to your pastor, it is easy to take him for granted. We often neglect those with whom we are familiar. I remember one pastor who had never been honoured by his congregation. However, his church was constantly blessing a particular honoured visiting preacher. When this visiting preacher came to hold a convention, the crowds would gather and the people would express their appreciation to the visiting minister. They would bring money and gifts to honour him. But the church would never honour its own pastor.

The deception here is that the visitor is the one who is sent from God to them. *But the reality is that their own familiar pastor is the one who labours over them with love.*

I teach my church members that it is biblical to honour and give gifts to a man of God. This is not to enhance the minister's lifestyle but it is to honour God's gift and to kill the spirit of familiarity.

CHAPTER 14

Mysterious Barrenness

But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but THE LORD HAD SHUT UP HER WOMB.

1 Samuel 1:5

Many people suffer from a mysterious form of barrenness. Barrenness is mysterious when the cause is unclear. What is the mysterious cause of my fruitlessness? What am I missing? Why is my church not growing? Why is my ministry not developing? Why is it that everything I start and do is not blooming and flourishing as I expect? There are many times you cannot easily find the cause of barrenness and unfruitfulness. In medical science, there are many cases of barrenness where the cause is uncertain. Indeed, sometimes doctors are happy to just find a reason for the barrenness. Hannah is a good example of a mysteriously barren ministry that became fruitful. She is one of the great examples of someone who broke out of the power of barrenness and became very fruitful.

The key to breaking out of mysterious barrenness is intercession prayers, where you go into the mysterious spirit realm and obtain the solution and an answer. When you speak in tongues you speak mysteries to God! Speaking in tongues causes you to address mysteries with mysteries. The great key that Hannah demonstrated was again the key of intercession. Great ministries are born out of intercession.

Hannah was a barren ministry. Hannah was in serious trouble. She desperately needed a breakthrough. She did not just *doodle and dawdle*. To doodle and dawdle means "To hang around, loiter, to waste time and to make wavy impressions". She was dead serious about what she wanted from God.

Dear pastor, fervent prayer will make you give birth to a new dimension in ministry. Intercession will always lead to new spiritual children.

Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

1 Samuel 1:13

The Church prayed fervently for the power of the Holy Spirit to be upon their leaders. That is how they broke through and became fruitful.

And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: … By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God

with boldness.

Acts 4:23-24, 30-31

God heard their prayer and look at the results.

When a church begins to pray fervently there are always results. The word of God is preached when prayer goes forth. Churches spring up when the word of God is preached.

It is important to stress that *fervent* prayer is what makes the difference. Sometimes, I look at people who claim to be having a prayer meeting. You see some of them sleeping and others just whiling away time. How would you feel if someone fell asleep while talking to you? You would think that he is either disrespectful or very uninterested in you.

Jesus also prayed passionately for the will of God to be done in His life.

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Hebrews 5:7

The evidence of this was when His "...sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Fervent prayer always works.

The ministry of Jesus was a great success! Two thousand years after these prayers, churches are still being started, books are still being written, songs are being composed about Christ, and more people are volunteering their lives to the service of our great God.

You will have great success in your ministry when you learn how to pray fervently. **Whenever you do not know what to do, do what Jesus did!** Jesus shouted when He prayed! (Hebrews 5:7). He prayed until He was sweating! Read it for yourself!

And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Luke 22: 44

You are coming out of barrenness today!

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

Acts 13:1-4

The ministries of Paul and Barnabas were born out of intercession. The ministries of these two great men of God in New Testament times were born as they ministered unto the Lord and fasted. A praying church will always lead to new ministries and church growth. The way out of barrenness is the way into ministry. It is the way into evangelism. I believe that fervent prayer will almost always lead to fruitfulness in a minister's life. *A prayerful church almost always becomes*

fruitful. Churches are born and ministers are sent out when real prayer begins.

Mysterious prayer will be the power that will break through the mysterious restrictions and barriers that hold you back from your fruitfulness.

Conclusion

It is my prayer that you will rise out of every form of barrenness that afflicts you. You will become a fruitful tree in the house of the Lord! No kind of barrenness will be associated with you after today!

To the making of many books there is no end! By these few words, receive encouragement and become a fruitful tree.